

Theocritus

BY BELLE RADCLIFFE LAVERACK

HE was a Shepherd, a Shepherd of the Golden Age. He had been for a long, long time—since the day before yesterday.

His previous incarnations had been many and varied. In the last and most sympathetic, he had been the Ancient Mariner, and the Mariner had been the lineal descendant of Jason, and Jason of Odysseus, and Odysseus of Launcelot, and Launcelot of King Solomon, and so on back, back into the night of time, back to where memory ceased.

Of course one's last incarnation was always the most sympathetic. That was why you chose it, or it chose you. So the career of Mariner, for all its grimness, had had a fascination possessed by no earlier calling. To be "alone, alone—all, all alone," to be let alone. Could anything be better than that?

The transition from the rôle of Mariner to that of a Shepherd of the Golden Age had been easy and natural. There had been no jar, no forced adjustment; it had happened in this wise.

He had been waiting in line at the Library. Just before him in the line was a slender lady. "I would like," said the slender lady—"I would like a copy of Theocritus." He pricked up his ears, for his own real name, quite apart from his many incarnations, was Theocritus. What other Theocritus might there be, of whom you could get a copy?

The girl in the blue dress brought the slender lady several books; she chose one and passed on. Then the girl turned to Theocritus. "I would like," he said, just as the slender lady had said it—"I would like a copy of Theocritus."

The girl looked down at him, smiling. He didn't come much above the top of the desk. "Which translation do you prefer?" she asked, "or do you want the original?" There was something in her voice which Theocritus recognized, and which he didn't like. He had no name

for it, but it was often in people's voices when they spoke to him.

Without waiting for him to reply, which saved him embarrassment, the girl handed him the books which the slender lady hadn't taken. He looked at them. In the front of one there was a little picture, and he decided on that. The girl gave it to him with the smile that matched the hurtful note in her voice, and he walked out of the Library, and into the square upon which it faced. It was a dingy spot—brown grass, a few tired trees, several benches, and tired people sitting on them.

Theocritus sat down on one of the benches and opened his book.

On the title-page was his own name, his own uncomfortable name. You can't imagine how uncomfortable it is to be named Theocritus if you haven't tried it. The names Bion and Moschus were also on the title-page. He was lucky, he reflected, to have escaped being called after them, too.

The picture which had decided him in his choice of the book was a picture of out-of-doors. A boy, more possibly a youth, was seated on the grass; through the grass a stream was flowing. Sheep were grazing about him. In the distance were mountains. The coloring of the picture, a soft brown, suggested evening—and yes, it was evening: there over the mountain hung a new moon.

How nice and quiet it all looked, how tolerant and easy-going appeared the sheep! Theocritus began to turn the pages.

"Would that my father had taught me the craft of a keeper of sheep!" he read. "For so in the shade of the elm-tree, or under the rocks by the stream, piping on reeds, I had sat and lulled my sorrow to sleep." Again he read:

"Sweet is the voice of the heifer, sweet her breath; sweet to lie beneath the sky in summer, by running water."

On and on he read until all his little being was filled with the murmur and the stir of things lovely and unknown.

The man next him on the seat stirred. He had been asleep; yawning he arose and slouched away. Theocritus raised his eyes. Again the worn grass, again the tired trees, and the tired people on the benches opposite, again the din of the streets; only dimly he noted it all. Clearer than the noise about him sounded in his ears the shepherd's pipe, clearer than what lay before him spread the sunlit slopes of the fragrant hillside. Dimly, too, he noted that some one else was sitting on the bench near him—another shepherd; they two on beds of leaves beside the springs of chill waters.

Now Theocritus looked up. Alas, it was no shepherd; it was only a slender lady. Theocritus had seen her before—where, when was it? Oh yes, he remembered. She was the lady who had been before him in the line at the library, she who had asked for a copy of Theocritus. She had it now, open in her hands, but she wasn't reading. She was looking straight before her. She, too, he thought, must be gazing upon sunlit slopes. He drew closer to her.

She felt him at her side and, startled, looked down. Her face had in it the magic of the pages before him; it, too, told him of a lovely, dawning world.

"We're reading the same book," he said, softly, "so we're seeing the same things." She smiled, a far-away smile, a gleam of sunshine on a distant hill.

Again he spoke: "I'm going to be a shepherd; I'm going to be one always."

She didn't ask him why: his eyes, blue, wide apart, very tranquil, gave the answer. "You'll be a good shepherd," she said. Her voice was like the distant singing of the brook.

He continued: "I've never really seen what we've been reading about. I've never seen a shepherd, I've never seen a stream, I've never seen a mountain, I've never seen any sheep; but I've seen goats," he added.

"Have you never been away from the city?" she asked.

"Oh yes," Theocritus replied. "But where we went there were lots of people, and a big lake full of water and boats, and a wood with red swings in it. But

you have been to where the book tells about," he continued, his eyes always on her face. "You look as if you lived there all the time."

She shook her head. "No," she answered, "I haven't lived there for a long, long time, but I can see it all now just as if it were here."

"Tell me about it," he said, and curled himself up closer to her on the bench.

She hesitated a moment; then—"The place that I see isn't in the book," she replied. "Theocritus never saw it; but he would have loved it had he seen it, it is such a place for a shepherd. Oh, if I could only make you see it, Little Shepherd! Let me try and draw it for you." From between the pages of the book she took a pencil and a sheet of paper. Theocritus leaned his cheek against her shoulder. Swiftly, surely she drew.

"It is like this," she said. "Here is the valley, and here is the river flowing through the valley, and here are meadows, very green, and many high trees; and here, see, are the hills—so many hills, some soft and round, like these, some grave and distant, like these. See how they lie along the river like a deep blue wave that never breaks. And here, just here where it should be watching over the valley, is the mountain like the mother Ætna Theocritus sings about. And here, right here by the low stone wall, on the hillside, is the place where you sit in the evening while your sheep graze in the fields near you, and the pine-trees sigh above you, and the moon watches you over the mountain, and—" she stopped drawing; Theocritus, looking up, saw that her eyes were closed.

"And," he prompted, gently.

"And," she went on, speaking as if to herself, "sometimes as you sit here in the evening the new moon calls and mists rise languid from the river, like a white tide, and overspread the meadows, rising almost to the top of the mountain; then, still languid, they withdraw, and in the morning light the valley glistens with the drops of dew which the tide of the mists has left as the sea leaves the little shining shells upon the shore." Her voice was so low now that Theocritus could scarcely hear her. "Once," she said, "we wondered if the voice of the

mist sang in the drops of dew as the sea sings in the shining shells."

She opened her eyes. "I haven't seen it for so long," she said. Then she looked down at Theocritus sitting charmed beside her; her eyes were shining like the little shells. "And I cannot make you see it, can I, Shepherd Boy? I cannot show you how green the meadows are, or how purple the hills, or how blue the sky; I cannot make you feel the clear sunshine or the dark warm shadows, I cannot tell you how the thrushes sing. Oh, but it is all lovely—so lovely that the whole valley just laughs and sings, and the clouds passing over it, they laugh and sing too as they pass."

Theocritus sighed, a sigh of deep content. "And was there a shepherd there?" he asked.

She was looking far off.

"There was a shepherd there," she answered. "He sat and piped on the hillside in the evening, but—" here she laughed softly. "He never could pipe very well," she said.

Theocritus was silent, still leaning his cheek against her shoulder, there was so much to think about. Then he began to turn the pages of the book. In a moment he stopped.

"How do you say n-y-m-p-h?" he asked.

Smiling, she said it for him.

"Was there one of them," he queried, "in the lovely place, and did the shepherd sing to her and chase her through the trees?"

"There was a nymph," she answered, slowly, "and the shepherd sang to her in the evening, but she was cruel and very vain, as nymphs are, and always when he pursued her she fled from him, and then one day he went away, he left the valley, and then—" she paused.

"And then," again he prompted her.

"And then," she continued, "when the shepherd was gone, when the nymph no longer heard his voice in the evening or felt him near her on the hillside, then the valley became a desolate place to her, and she too went away, and she came at last into the city, where she is now, they say, wandering about like a poor lost sheep. Oh, Shepherd Boy," she went on, and her voice was filled with something that hurt him, "it is very hard to be a nymph in a stony city, for always

the pavements are hard for her, and the working for bread is hard for her, and always she is longing for the deep, still places and the wild sweet air of the woods." She stopped and rose from the bench suddenly. "I mustn't talk about her any more, Little Shepherd, and you must forget all the sad part of the story and just remember the lovely place—will you?"

"But I want to know more things," exclaimed Theocritus, getting down off the bench and walking beside her slowly across the square. "I want to know where the shepherd is, and is he sad, too?"

"I don't know where he is," was her answer. "I'm sure he isn't sad, though, and he isn't a shepherd any more, I'm told. Long ago he laid aside his pipe, and he has become a great man, they say. Oh no, he can't be sad, the shepherd."

They had come out of the square, and stood on the corner of the street with the crowds of people sweeping past them. Theocritus noticed now that she was very pale. He took her hand. "And what is the name of the sad nymph?" he asked.

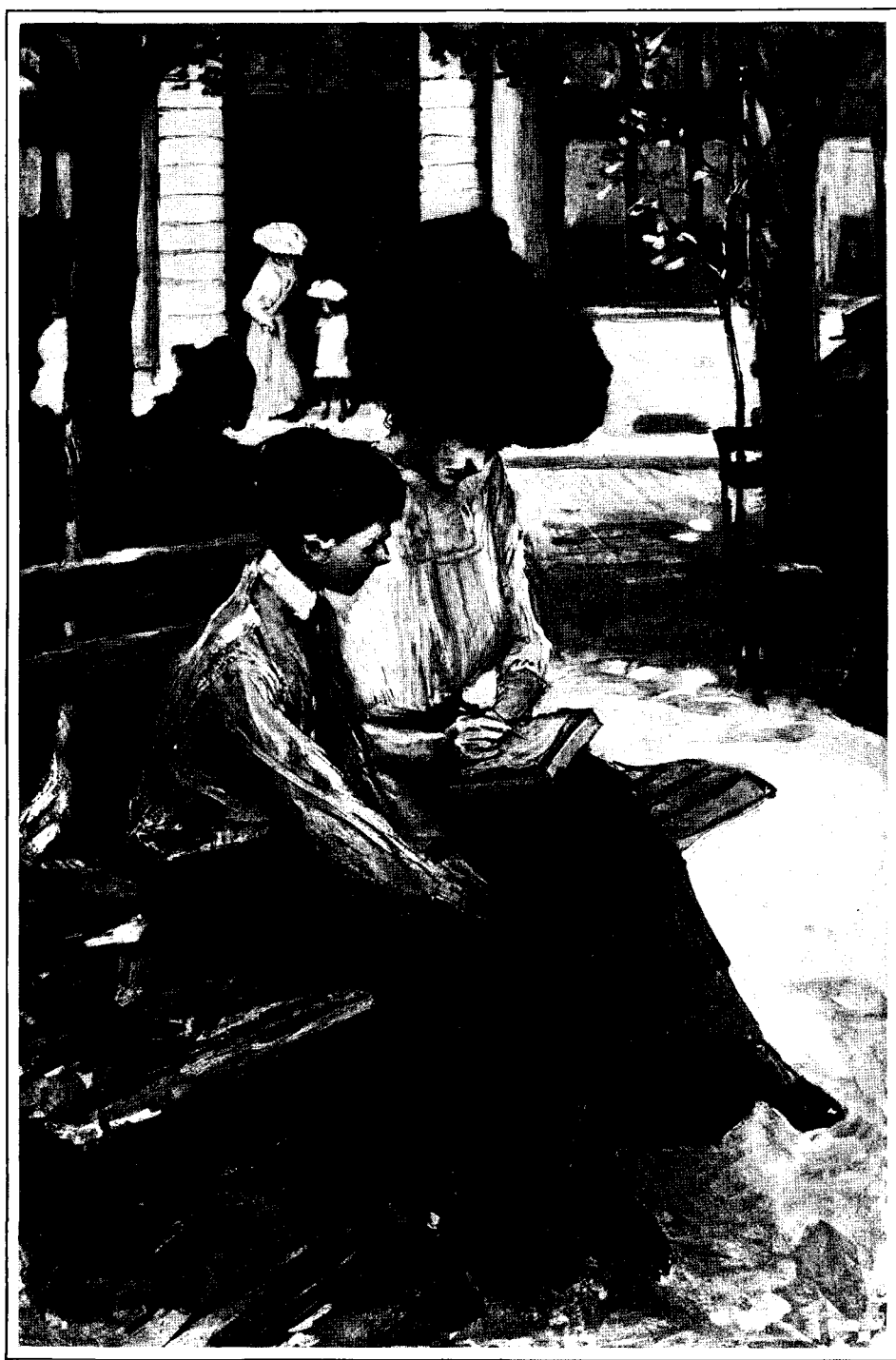
"The shepherd," she answered, not looking at him at all—"the shepherd always called her Nycheia of the April eyes. And you, Shepherd Boy"—smiling down at him—"tell me now what your name is before we part."

For the first time in his life he named his name without shame.

"Theocritus!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide and bright. "Oh, I'm glad you have come, Theocritus. Now you will sing to the nymphs and to the woodland people who are shut away in the great cities; for there are so many of them, just like the nymph I told you of, so many who are sighing for the sweet open places that they never see, and no one has heeded them or sung to them for so long. Don't forget them, Theocritus." She turned to go, but he clung to her hand.

"Won't you give me the picture of the lovely place," he begged, "the one you made, and won't you tell me where you live?"

She took from the book the picture she had drawn and wrote on the back of it. "Here is where I live," she said, handing it to him. "Come and pipe to



Drawn by H. G. Williamson

"LET ME TRY AND DRAW IT FOR YOU"

me, Shepherd, or sing to me, Theocritus, in the evening."

Again she started to go, but again he held her back, his eager eyes on her face. "I'm going to find that shepherd," he said, "and I will tell him all about April Eyes and he will find her, and then she won't be sad any more; then they will go back to the lovely place."

But she shook her head with a wistful little laugh. "Oh no, Shepherd Boy, you must not tell the shepherd, you must not tell any one about April Eyes. The shepherd will not care now, he would not try and find her, and it would hurt her, I know it would hurt her, to have others know her story. I don't know why I have told it to you, but I have, so let it be a secret always between you and me. Don't forget, Shepherd Boy," and this time, before he knew it, she was gone.

When he reached home, he found Horatius sitting on the front steps. Horatius was his brother, his senior by two years; he was also the source of all evil. As to the reason for their being named Horatius and Theocritus, suffice it to say that in so calling them an attempt had been made to give distinction to a last name almost humorously commonplace.

Just now, to the casual observer, Horatius, sitting on the steps in the cool of the day, certainly appeared innocent enough. But to Theocritus he appeared anything but innocent. Horatius was waiting for him; his eyes roved restlessly.

"Where yer been?" was his greeting; it rang like a tocsin in the tense ear of Theocritus.

"To the Library," he replied, distantly.

Horatius snatched the book from him. Theocritus took this calmly. Once, but only once, Horatius had inflicted fatal injuries upon a Library book.

In opening the book the picture of the Lovely Place fell out upon the steps. Involuntarily Theocritus sprang for it, but Horatius was before him. Small use now to assume indifference; the keen sense of Horatius divined a value in the picture.

"You did this, I s'pose," he said, scanning it ironically. If saying he did would have helped any, I think Theoc-

ritus would have said it, but he realized the hopelessness of his cause.

"No," he said, "I didn't do it." Outwardly he appeared calm, but he was really fearfully anxious.

Horatius looked at him. "You want it back, don't you, The-oc-ri-tus?" he grinned. "Well, you can't have it—see?" and he leaped to the sidewalk and was off up the street, the paper waving in his hand.

Theocritus stood watching him in limp despair. Before the might of Horatius and his assembling hosts he was powerless; he knew that. He couldn't bear to see them down there gathered about the sacred picture; so, after picking up the book, he slowly went up the steps and into the house, into his room, and flung himself on the floor.

Gone were the fields, gone were the mountains, gone were the sheep; gone, gone all traces of the slender lady and the Lovely Place. All vanished at the hand of Horatius, the destroyer. Only a prostrate, tuneless Theocritus remained, a little broken harp from which the music had fled.

All this happened on Saturday. He kept his identity concealed, he revealed himself to no one until Monday, and then he blundered hopelessly, he gave it all away—which brings us back to the beginning of the story.

It was in history class. They were learning things about Alexander the Great. Alexander was a spirited hero, the class liked him, and the recitation had been unusually brisk and sympathetic. But Alexander must not, so the teacher reminded them at the end of the period—Alexander must not, for all his fascination, be looked upon as the type of man to be admired or followed. There were other heroes, heroes of peace, whose lives left indeed no glittering wake, but who, humbly, often obscurely, labored for the good of men. "Now," said the teacher, looking earnestly at the rows of faces before her—"now, I want some of you boys to tell me what you want to be when you grow up. Whom would you most rather be like?"

The result of this appeal to the benches was disappointing. The paths of glory were quite good enough and safe

enough for them; small matter where they led. No one expressed the slightest interest in the heroes of peace until the question came to Theocritus.

"And you, Theocritus," said the teacher, "what would you like to be?"

Theocritus lifted his tranquil gaze; before he realized it the words escaped him. "A shepherd," he replied, and then wished with all his might that he hadn't. Little gusts of fear ruffled the clear blue of his eyes.

The class swayed in merriment. The teacher was surprised, as she generally was by Theocritus; you never knew where you were going to find him.

"A shepherd!" she said. "That is very sweet. What made you think of that, Theocritus?"

He had to give some explanation. To his astonishment, he heard himself asserting calmly, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Then he wondered why he had said it. The teacher also wondered why, but she didn't like to ask. There must be some line of connection, clear to Theocritus, which should be obvious to her.

"Oh," she said, hesitatingly, "you mean, Theocritus, that because the Lord is *your* Shepherd, because He takes care of you, so you wish to be like Him, and to guide and take care of other people. That is a beautiful thought, Theocritus. You have grasped, as none of the others, the idea that I meant you to get from to-day's lesson."

When the session was over, Theocritus lingered in the school-room. He hoped the boys would get tired of waiting for him outside, but they didn't. They were there, gathered about the gate, and he braced himself to meet them. Hideous sounds escaped them as he approached. "Baa! baa! baa!" they called, in horrible caricature, and wagged hurriedly improvised tails.

He walked past them, pretending not to notice, and they closed in around him. "Lead us, Shepherd," they called—"lead us home." "Leave them alone, and they'll come home, wagging their tails behind them," they chanted. At first the little shepherd walked slowly, his uncouth flock cavorting at his heels; he was bound he wouldn't notice them. Then he couldn't stand it any longer

and began to run. He ran like the wind, for he was practised; he was always in flight, always escaping. The flock pursued him, baaing stridently, but he reached the kitchen door first, banged it to, and locked it. Outside the flock consulted. Horatius was about to show another way of entrance, when—was it a fire-engine or an ambulance bell that sounded in the street?—away scampered the fickle sheep.

He watched them through the blinds until they disappeared, then he listened until all sound of them had died away. Now he must act quickly before they were upon him again. From under the mattress he brought forth an old tin horn, from under the stove he brought forth a white cat; with these in his arms he opened the door, looked, listened again, and then he made for the back fence. Once over this, he came to another and then another. He breasted them manfully, like a little sea-tossed boat now sinking in the trough, now rising again to the crest of the high-board waves. It was a perilous trip. He and the cat clung to each other desperately; twice he lost the horn overboard, but at last they reached the harbor.

It wasn't much of a place to look at. It hadn't been chosen on account of its scenic advantages, but because of its matchless situation, there being no inhabitants in the adjoining house; moreover the neighboring tribes were friendly.

To any one possessed of historic sense the spot was encrusted with associations. Here was Camelot, here was Troy, here was the Hellespont, here were leagues of unvisited salt seas. Here was now to be the Lovely Place.

It didn't take long to get it ready. The cat he made fast to a derelict clothes-pole. Immediately she became a flock of sheep, and the pole began to sigh like many pine-trees. It wasn't orthodox, of course, this making fast your sheep, but then it was necessary to take some liberties with tradition.

Then he mounted the pile of boxes in the corner, and put his horn to his lips. There, just where it should be—he remembered the words of the slender lady—was a sloping blue slate roof, his Master Ætna. Fixing his eyes upon it, he began to pipe. Ah, sweet it was to pipe on one's

own hillside, with one's own mountain there before one. Sweet the breath of one's own meadows, and sweet to know one's sheep beside one.

"Come, come, April Eyes," he fluted. "Here is the Lovely Place. Come, come, Wandering Shepherd. Come and sit beside me here; take up again your pipe, and together we will sing of sad April Eyes, sweetest of all the nymphs. Come, come."

But no one came, and the purple of his mountain deepened as the shadows lengthened. "Come, come," insisted the plaintive pipe, and at last he appeared, the Wandering Shepherd. He came forth from the house that had never had any one in it before, and approached his hillside. As to his being the Wandering Shepherd there could be no doubt; there was a pastoral air about him, he adorned but did not disturb the landscape. His greeting still further established his identity, for he spoke as only a fellow-craftsman would speak. "And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?" He said Touchstone, but he might have meant Theocritus.

"I like it," replied Theocritus, cordially. "I like it better than any other life."

The shepherd sat down on the hillside near him.

"Those are fine sheep you have," he remarked.

The flock was washing its face. Theocritus surveyed it complacently; then he looked at the new-comer. He liked him, he decided, better than any one he had ever met before, excepting, of course, the slender lady. He was tall, long of limb, and broad of shoulder. His eyes, under heavy black brows, were gray, and had the far-away look of a shepherd.

"And this is a fine country for sheep," continued the newcomer. "The outlook over the valley is very fair; there, if I mistake not, winds the river." He indicated a worn bit of sidewalk.

"Yes," replied Theocritus; "and there"—pointing with his pipe—"are meadows, and they are very green, and there are many hills, and some are big and some are soft and round; and there is the mountain, and sometimes"—here he shut his eyes—"in the morning, after the mists go away from the meadows,

you will find little shells, and they will sing, and the clouds will sing too."

The shepherd had been watching him with smiling intentness. Now he looked about him again.

"It is very like a country that I used to know," he said, "the country where I was a shepherd; it was the loveliest place in the world."

"*This* is the Lovely Place," asserted Theocritus. "I was piping to you to come to it, and you came."

Again his companion looked at him with smiling eyes. What part was this, he wondered, that he was being suddenly called upon to act in the playhouse of this small mind. He must try and not mar the performance.

"I'm glad I heard you, Master Shepherd," he replied, "for I would rather come back to this place than to any other. I return to it very often. That is the best part of having been a shepherd. You can always go back to the life again; it's always waiting for you."

His interpretation of the part assigned him was apparently giving satisfaction, for the young shepherd went on with his questions.

"What do you do when you aren't a shepherd?"

"What do I do?" returned the other, stroking the flock. "Well, I follow the muses always, wherever I am. I'm a painter. I paint pictures. I'd like to paint you some time, Master Shepherd, if you'll let me. Will you?"

The eyes of Theocritus opened in wide dismay. Once, when he was very small, Horatius had painted him.

His companion seemed to understand his hesitation.

"Oh, I don't mean paint *you*," he laughed. "I mean paint a picture of you—do you see?—on your hillside; you'd like that, wouldn't you?" Theocritus thought he would.

"And with your sheep," continued his companion. "One very seldom sees such excellent sheep."

This brought them back to vocational themes; from thence, Theocritus thought, they could pass, skilfully skirting the secret, to the subject of nymphs.

"Did you have fine sheep," he asked, "when you were a shepherd?"

This time the reply was not clear to

him. "‘Dreams were my flock,’" replied the other, slowly. "‘Swift dreams, the passion-winged ministers of thought.’ I went away and left them on the hillside, and whenever I go back they are still waiting for me, dim ghosts of dreams, just where I left them."

They were both silent for a moment; Theocritus was trying to understand. There was something in the face of his companion as he said these last words that reminded him of the slender lady. What did they both see that made them look like that?

Now the shepherd spoke again.

"I was Daphnis once," he said. "Do you know who Daphnis was? He was the man the muses loved, the man not hated of the nymphs. It was rather a joke my being named for him, for I did sing so very badly."

Here Theocritus interrupted. "I can sing," he announced.

"I'm sure you can, Master Shepherd," returned Daphnis. "Why don't we have a contest of song now? that's what two dreamy herdsmen on the side of a mountain always do. Come, now, do thou begin and I will follow after, as Theocritus would have us say."

Oh, what a good time he was having! How much nicer it was to be two shepherds instead of one! In the dim background of his mind stirred the Mariner, gaunt reminder of an earlier, friendless age.

Again he lifted his eyes to his mountain.

"Come, come," he chanted, "here is the Lovely Place; come, come, here is the Wandering Shepherd; come—"

He got no farther, for a sound such as was never uttered in the Golden or any other age, by sheep or shepherd, came from the fence opposite, and there, over the top of the fence, leered the war-scarred visage of Horatius. His beautiful scenery swayed, tottered, and then fell crumbling in ruins about him.

Daphnis's eyes followed the direction of the Shepherd's stricken gaze.

"Why do you look so frightened?" he asked. "Who's that boy?"

Theocritus gasped. "That's Horatius," he whispered. "He spoils everything."

"He does look rather barbaric, doesn't he?" said Daphnis; "but who are the

others? Why, look at them. It looks as if we were going to be besieged."

Over the fence other heads were appearing, grinning, detestably familiar.

"What do they want?" laughed Daphnis.

Theocritus clutched his pipe nervously. "They want me," he faltered; "they always want me. Horatius makes them, and—and—" he burst out, "he stole my picture, my picture of the Lovely Place, and I'll never get it back." His voice quivered.

By this time the invaders had advanced as far as getting astride the fence. Here they halted and took counsel, for the companion of Theocritus was tall and broad and his proclivities unknown.

Theocritus watched them anxiously; would they make Daphnis laugh at him, too?

But now Daphnis was speaking; he was saying incredible things.

"I wouldn't let Horatius treat me like that if I were you." Yes, that was what he was saying. "You're almost as big as he is; go for him now and make him give the picture back. Just because you're a shepherd, that's no reason why you shouldn't fight. I've had a good many fights in my day. I'd like to see you vanquish Horatius."

Ah, what was this that at these words moved deep within him, Theocritus? Even to the farthest confines of his little soul he felt it—a stirring, an awakening, a swift on-rushing of all the long-subdued, long-bondaged forces of his unresisting nature.

Daphnis, watching him, saw his wide eyes bright with a light never burning there before, the camp-fires of his oncoming army.

Without a word he arose, and unprotected by flag of truce, with no weapon save the instrument of his calling, he crossed the enemy's lines, walked straight up to the champion of their hosts, and hurled his challenge, his stone from the brook.

"Give me back my picture." Was this his voice, with the imperious ring?

Horatius just looked at him, while a hush fell on the besiegers.

He stamped his foot, he raised a menacing arm.

"Give me back my picture, or I'll come and get it back."

Horatius seemed to regain consciousness, but he didn't stir; the careless insolence of his position never changed.

"Baa-a-a!" that was all he said.

It is the signal for the assault.

The Little Shepherd springs forward, he seizes Horatius about the knees, now they are upon the ground, and soon—yes, it is he, Theocritus, who prevails; and at the sight, the myrmidons of Horatius, swift to side with the victor, burst into ringing cheers.

"Theocritus! Theocritus!" It is his name that is resounding from the fence top; what a war-cry it makes, his long-derided name!

And now the pockets of Horatius are flung open wide, and far and near upon the ground is strewn the loot of many conquests; and at last, languishing in a remote cell, he finds it, the captive paper. Frail, pallid, but still breathing, still alive, he brings it forth, and holding it high above him, amid the shouts of both armies, he returns to his hillside, to Daphnis, to his wondering flock.

The welcome due to a conqueror is his. "Well done, Master Shepherd; well done, Theocritus!" His mighty hand is grasped and wrung.

Looking back, he sees that Horatius has withdrawn, that the battlements are deserted, and then, "the tumult and the shouting dies," the landscape resumes its tranquil outlines, again the peace, the peace and fragrance of the fields at sundown surround them; again, just as of old, they two are seated together, overlooking the valley.

Now, crowning glory, he discovers that he is wounded, his cheek is torn, is almost bleeding; perhaps, perhaps it will leave a scar.

"But why didn't you tell me that you were Theocritus?" laughed Daphnis. With a very big, clean pocket-handkerchief he was removing the stains of battle. "To think that I've been sitting next Theocritus all the afternoon, and never knew it, although, of course, I knew you could be no ordinary shepherd. And now, young hero, that your wounds are dressed, let's see the picture, the picture 'that launched a thousand ships.'"

With shining eyes Theocritus unfolded it, and together they bent over its faded surface; for it was very faded, very

blurred. It was as if the mists had risen and smoothed away all the outlines, leaving only the clear top of the mountain.

"Why, it's torn," cried Theocritus; "it's torn just where the shepherd sat, and where she wrote on the other side, and I can't find her, after all." What with victory and disappointment and other strong emotions, he was nearly in tears.

"Well, that's hard luck, Master Shepherd," said Daphnis, "hard luck." He took the paper from Theocritus's uncertain fingers and began to fold it gently. Then he gave it back to him. "You must always keep it. It's your Declaration of Independence; remember you fought for it, and you won. Where did you first get the picture, anyway? Who drew the Declaration up for you?"

"Why, the slender lady made it for me," replied Theocritus; it was strange to have to explain anything to Daphnis, who had seemed to understand all things. "She told me about the Lovely Place, and about you, that you were the Wandering Shepherd. And she told me about—about—" He stopped. He had grounded on the secret; in his excitement he had overlooked it on his chart, the hidden reef—April Eyes.

A second later and all would have been lost.

"Oh, it was she who told you about the Wandering Shepherd?" Daphnis smiled. So that was the part he had been playing all this time, under unknown but skilled direction.

He stood up. "Well, I'm glad I came your way, Shepherd Boy," he said, "but now I must wander on; it's growing late. See the sky, how flushed it is. The sun must be setting gloriously somewhere, far beyond the city, back of a still blue mountain that I know."

Hands in his pockets, he stood looking off to where a narrow break between the houses showed the shining wake of the vanishing day.

Theocritus didn't hear him, Theocritus didn't notice him. Waves of indecision and uncertainty were beating against his small stranded bark. He could go neither forward nor back; he was just stuck. And it was his secret, his hidden treasure, that thus barred the way. He hadn't realized what a barrier to all progress it would be.

"Tell no one about April Eyes, Shepherd Boy; let it be a secret always between you and me." Above all the uproar of doubt rose the voice of the slender lady warning him to go no farther.

He looked up at Daphnis, whose eyes were still fixed on the golden path.

"Was there," he asked, timidly—"was there a nymph where you were?"

"Yes," replied Daphnis, still looking after the day. "Yes, there was."

"Would you like to see her again?" went on the small voice.

Daphnis didn't reply for a moment; then, "Yes," he said, quietly, and still he looked at the far-away light. "Yes, I should like to see her again, but she wouldn't like to see me. She always fled from me in the old days."

Neither spoke for a few minutes; then the small voice continued. "The slender lady," it said—"the slender lady told me that there were nymphs in the city, and that they were sad. Perhaps your nymph is in the city and we can find her. Let's go and look for her." If he couldn't go over the secret, perhaps he might get safely around it.

The last ripple of light had died away. Daphnis turned his eyes from the now quiet sky. He was back again in the dreary little yard—but there at his side was the eager young face, and the eyes into which he looked seemed to hold the promise of the sunset.

"Perhaps she is in the city," he assented; "perhaps she is, but I sha'n't try and find her; it wouldn't do any good. She wouldn't want to be found."

Oh, the grinding, grinding of the secret! Something must be done. Theocritus jumped up. "Well, I'm going to find her," he proclaimed. "I'm going to pipe for her, and she will come just the way you came. I will pipe and I will sing—and I can fight now, too," he added.

Daphnis smiled.

"She used to come and listen," he said, "when Theocritus sang to us long ago, on a hillside in a lovely place, but she will never come again, little Theocritus, however much you sing."

As he was speaking he walked toward the house, Theocritus at his side.

When they reached the steps he stopped. "This is where I live now,"

he said. "I only moved in a few days ago, and things are awfully upset, so I won't ask you to come up, but in a few days you must come, and then we'll begin our picture. Good night, Master Theocritus," and he went up the steps and into the house.

In the growing darkness Theocritus stood and thought. Was ever shepherd so put to it? Were there ever such contrary, impossible, helpless sheep to fold as nymphs and shepherds? He sighed heavily. Well, he must after the lost one alone, out into the night—on to the wide moorlands of the city. Pipe in hand, he was preparing to leave, when just then a voice came to him, through the dusk from the direction of the fence, a mild, small voice. "Aren't you comin' home to supper, Theocritus?" It was the voice of Horatius.

Theocritus sauntered across the yard. He would make it as easy as he could for Horatius.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, carelessly. "There's something else I want to do," and then he realized on a sudden that heroes must be refreshed. "Well, I guess I'll come," he decided, graciously.

He stooped to gather in his flock, which was rubbing against him. "Let me carry her, Theocritus." What a nice voice Horatius had!

"Oh, I don't mind," said Theocritus. "Come on this way; it isn't much longer." Together they went out past the house to the sidewalk. Side by side, the lion and the lamb.

It was Horatius who first spoke, deferentially. "Theocritus, who's the big man who was with you this afternoon?"

"Oh, he's a friend of mine," replied Theocritus. "He's another shepherd."

He felt the impressive effect of this in Horatius's silence, which lasted some minutes. Then Horatius said:

"Won't you teach me how to play shepherd, Theocritus, me and the other fellers?"

Theocritus considered; then, "Yes," he assented. "I will teach you. I will be the shepherd, and you can be the sheep, and I will lead you about."

As they turned into the yard, the light from the house fell full upon Horatius, upon his face. Something was the matter with one side of it; it was very red,

and his eye didn't look as large as usual. All the gentle heart of Theocritus quivered at the sight, for he knew by the smarting sensation on his own cheek just how that must feel.

"I'm awful sorry I hurt you, Horatius," he said, putting his arm on his brother's shoulder. "I'll be more careful next time."

No one ever dreamed of Theocritus doing anything that he shouldn't do. When, therefore, he retired to his own room shortly after supper and closed the door, lessons or bed were immediately assumed, and no one thought anything more about him.

He stood and thought—how much one had to think when one was a shepherd!—then with extremest caution he opened the window and leaned out. As he saw and felt the night, his heart beat high and sure, for never could April Eyes resist the call of such a night. The wind was saying such mysterious things, the wind was doing such mysterious things. It was high up in the sky with the moon and the swift-darting clouds. It was sweeping imperiously through the streets. He would join it; then to its many voices would be added his slender pipe, and the sound of it would be borne over the wastes of the city—somewhere to the listening heart of April Eyes. Without further thought, he swung himself out of the window, his room was very near the ground, and ran to the street, where the great-hearted wind welcomed him and bore him swiftly on. Comrades, fellow-wanderers for ages past, they have been, the shepherds and the wise, searching, unwearying wind.

He put his pipe to his lips and began to blow lightly, and the wind, recognizing the sweet old sound, hushed its own voices and carried forward the uncertain notes.

Every now and then the Little Shepherd would pause and listen intently, hoping to hear through the darkness some answering call, but none came. There were few people on the streets, and these, hurrying by, did not heed him. He ceased his piping and began to sing softly: "April Eyes, April Eyes, don't you hear me? Somewhere you are listening to the wind; don't you hear me,

too—the Little Shepherd; me, Theocritus? Come to me and I will lead you home, back to the Lovely Place, April Eyes."

Suddenly the wind turned him around a corner, and there she was—the moonlight, brighter just here than the lights of the city, full upon her, his slender lady, April Eyes, one and the same. He didn't stop to reason it out. He had found her!

He ran and threw his arms about her.

"Why, Shepherd Boy," she exclaimed, her hands on his shoulders. "Shepherd Boy, what are you doing out alone in the night?"

"I was looking for you," he cried, joyously. "Looking for you, April Eyes, because you are wandering like a poor lost sheep, and I want you to come back with me to the Lovely Place, back to the—"

No, he must say nothing about the shepherd or she would be off again.

"But who told you that I was April Eyes, Shepherd Boy?" she asked. He looked up at her. "Why, your eyes," he said; "they told me."

She made no denial, but laughed her wistful laugh, just like a nymph.

"But I must take you home, Shepherd Boy," she said to him. "It is late, and it is you who should be led back, not I."

He started to resist; and then an idea came to him, a cunning idea by which he would entrap and capture her.

"This is the way," he said, putting his hand in hers. "We are almost there." Yes, they were almost there, almost at the Lovely Place. The far-seeing wind had brought them together just there.

"Did you hear me piping and singing from 'way off?" he asked, eagerly, as they walked on together.

"I heard a shepherd piping and singing," she answered. "The wind brought me the sounds from far off, but I didn't think it was you, Little Shepherd. Is this where you live? Are we there already?"

Without answering, he drew her forward; his heart was beating wildly. "Come back with me," he begged. "Come back and see the Lovely Place."

Wondering, she followed him past the house on into the dingy yard; then she stopped.

"This?" she said.

"Come to the hillside," he urged.

"Come and rest and don't be sad any more."

He led her to the pile of boxes, and she sat down beside him. He drew a sigh of relief; he had her, anyway. But there were no lights in the house where Daphnis lived. Where was Daphnis?

"See the mountain in the moonlight," he pointed proudly, "and the hills, and the river winding there. I think the mists are coming, don't you?"

Leaning her cheek on her hand, she gazed about her, smiling.

"Yes," she answered, "it does look very misty to me."

Oh, why didn't Daphnis come! "Here you are," he said, "and here's the Lovely Place, and now all we want is the shepherd. I wonder where he is?"

"I wonder," was all she answered.

He was listening intently to every sound, watching intently the dark house for any sign of life.

"The sky is like a great stormy sea, isn't it?" she said, looking up. "Watch the clouds; they break over the moon like scattering spray."

He forgot his own perplexities in a larger care.

"Nothing will happen to the moon, will it, or to the stars? Where are the stars?" He searched the rough sky anxiously.

"Don't you see them," she answered, "shining 'way beneath the waves? They are like the treasures that lie glittering under the sea, the gold that went down long ago in great ships, and that will lie there glittering forever."

She was casting her spell about him; he ceased to think of Daphnis. "Tell me more about the stars," he said, his hand in hers.

Her words came slowly, softly.

"They are like golden memories," she said, "that lie buried in our hearts, that sank there long ago when our hopes were lost and shipwrecked, and that will lie shining there forever."

"And what else are they like?" he questioned, gazing up wide-eyed.

"They are like golden words," she said,

"that were spoken long ago and that are still sounding, always sounding in the wastes and darkness, and that keep our lives from being shipwrecked too."

"But they are like something else," he exclaimed, starting up. "Do you know what?"

She shook her head.

"They are like the shining drops in the meadow," he laughed, "when the mists go away. Do you think the stars are singing, too, like the little drops?"

She smiled. "Let's listen," she said. "Perhaps we can hear them."

They sat listening, hand in hand; now it was dark, now light, about them, as the clouds covered and uncovered the moon.

"I only hear the wind," he whispered.

"And what is he saying?" she asked. "Can you understand him?"

Again he listened, then caught his breath; was that a footstep coming nearer—nearer?

"Yes, I can understand him," he whispered, clutching her hand tightly. "He—he says that he is bringing back the Wandering Shepherd. He says that the shepherd is nearly here; he says that he is here. Daphnis is here!" He jumped up and ran across the yard. "Daphnis," he cried, "I have found her. Come to the hillside. She is waiting; I have found her."

Daphnis looked down at him, his brow knit with surprise.

"Master Shepherd, what are you doing here so late? Whom have you found?"

Oh, the eternal stupidity of Daphnis!

"Why, April Eyes," he almost sobbed, "April Eyes." With both hands he tried to drag him forward.

Was that the shadow of a cloud, or did some one dart noiselessly past them?

He turned and looked; the hillside was deserted.

"She has gone, Daphnis," he wailed. "Gone again, out into the night. April Eyes has gone. Run, Daphnis, run, and bring her back! April Eyes has gone!"

For just an instant Daphnis hesitated, and then he turned and disappeared, he too out into the night.